



**Representative
Eric Pettigrew**

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Committees:

Juvenile Justice &
Family Law (*Vice Chair*)

Children & Family
Services

Trade & Economic
Development

Spring
2004

A Report to the 37th District

Dear Neighbor:

We finished the legislative session earlier this month in the state capital. Once again, it's my privilege to share a report on our work.

A wide variety of issues awaited us when we started out this past January. Most every single one of our top responsibilities revolves around these areas: Economic development, education, and health care. **In my opinion, these touchstones matter most for our citizens, families, and businesses.**

It's been quite a first term for me in the Legislature! My work both as vice chair of the Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee and as a member of the Children & Family Services Committee keeps me focused on real-life issues. **These are the things that hit home for our neighborhoods.** As a member of the Trade & Economic Development Committee, I'm also addressing matters that involve small, medium and large businesses.

Please feel free to contact me at any time with your thoughts or ideas on our community's past, present and future.

Sincerely,

Eric Pettigrew
State Representative
37th Legislative District

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Hunger:

New policy will provide help for thousands of people

We approved legislation to help stop the nightmare of hunger that is tormenting so many Seattle and other Washington families.

Last fall, the United States Department of Agriculture reported that in the year 2002 more than 100,000 Washington households had firsthand experience with hunger. That same year, upward of 300,000 other families saw times when they thought hunger might be just around the corner.

This year's new policy will help feed thousands of families in our state.

As you know, hungry children aren't good students. If you're 10 years old, for instance, and you're worried about where your next meal is coming from, school falls way down on your list of priorities. How can we expect a hungry child to get anywhere in school? Hungry students simply aren't likely to reach their highest potential.

The legislation — which I prime-sponsored in the House of Representatives — strengthens school-breakfast and school-lunch programs, especially in economically disadvantaged communities. Further, the Department of Social and Health Services will simplify reporting requirements for food stamps. Transitional food-stamp assistance will be available for a five-month period following a citizen's departure from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

No citizen and no family living in the richest country on Earth in the year 2004 should be suffering because they can't afford to buy food.

Business:

Success rate backs up use of incubator programs

Small businesses employ a large portion of Washington's work force — and I sponsored a measure to build a strong foundation for existing and potential small businesses.

The new policy creates the Small Business Incubator (SBI) Program to assist small businesses in economically

distressed or disadvantaged areas. Small-business incubators are proven tools in promoting economic development. Small businesses that receive assistance have a success rate of more than 80 percent — and a small-business incubator can cut the startup cost for a small business in half.

Further, small businesses working with an incubator generate \$45 in tax revenue for every \$1 of public investment in the SBI Program!

Business-incubators provide hands-on management help, access to financing, and technical support. The incubators can work with small businesses to obtain office space, equipment, and flexible leases. The program involves small businesses in manufacturing, technology, and other industries. Businesses usually work in an incubator program for two or three years.

This year's measure — the Washington Small Business Incubator and Assistance Act of 2004 — is supported by the Washington Community Alliance for Self-Help, and other local-government, educational, and business organizations.

Network 211:

Citizens need better access to social-services information

I was pleased to convince my colleagues to support a plan making sure our citizens receive quick access to information on social and emergency services.

Our legislation calls on Congress to implement the federal "Calling for 2-1-1 Act." The Washington Information Network 211 system is working to establish a state-wide 211 system. What we're asking in this year's legislation is that Congress do the right thing by providing a dependable level of funding for our state's growing 211 network.



Last year, I prime-sponsored legislation to set up our Network 211 system. Citizens can obtain details and referrals for health and human services — as well as information about services available either after a natural disaster or after a non-natural disaster.

A Report to the 37th District

The idea is to provide citizens with access to accurate, timely information on services — including quality child care, affordable housing, support for a homebound parent, and crisis-counseling for teenage parents. Hundreds of public and private groups and local, regional, and state-wide organizations in Washington are providing social services to meet people's needs. It's very difficult — and unnecessarily time-consuming — for people to sort through the organizations providing these essential services.

The 211 system is meant to enhance existing information and referral services here in our state. We want to help fill information gaps, and provide more efficient use of resources. This system will also augment our current 911 service, especially in the event of natural disasters or bioterrorism.



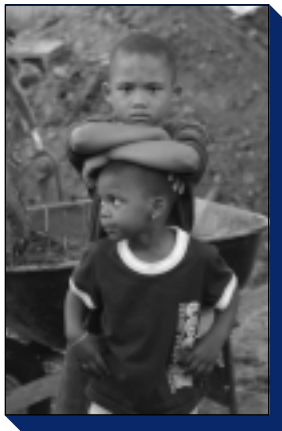
Kinship care: Assisting people who are raising young relatives

In the legislative session last year, I sponsored a policy to help families in which a young relative has been placed in foster care. I firmly believe we should do everything possible to help people who — for whatever reason — are raising their young relatives.

Kids need continuity and stability. Kids need their family — a caring relative to love them and raise them when some kind of circumstance takes them away from their birth parents. (Right now, more than 32,000 Washington children are living in a kinship-care placement.)

This session, I was able to win support for the inclusion of \$500,000 in the supplemental budget to help kinship-caregivers. Funding will be distributed among our state's Area Agencies on Aging — or with organizations that are working with these agencies.

Formal and informal help will be provided for people raising young relatives. I want these good people, very often the grandparents of the child, to have access to services such as counseling, support groups, and respite care.



History: Highlighting heritage for Native American children

Emphasizing the involvement of their tribes in the lives of all Native American children is the focus in another new measure approved this year.

A bill I prime-sponsored requires prompt notice when a court or petitioner knows or has reason to know that an Indian child is involved in an adoption proceeding. I've spent the last couple years helping shape policies to ensure the health and safety of Native American children in our Seattle neighborhoods and in other communities.

Last year, we set a direction aimed at making sure our courts know when a child involved in a third-party-custody proceeding is a Native American child.

It's critical that tribes receive timely notice regarding court proceedings involving their children. Only with this notice will tribes be able to participate in a child's life in a meaningful way. In addition to the notification procedures for Native American children in adoptions, the measure applies to Native American children in dependency proceedings and at-risk-youth proceedings.

I agree with my colleague — a Native American legislator from Snohomish County — who maintains that we should all know and understand our heritage. We've simply got to work hard to make sure young people — and all the rest of us, too — don't lose a sense of heritage and identity.

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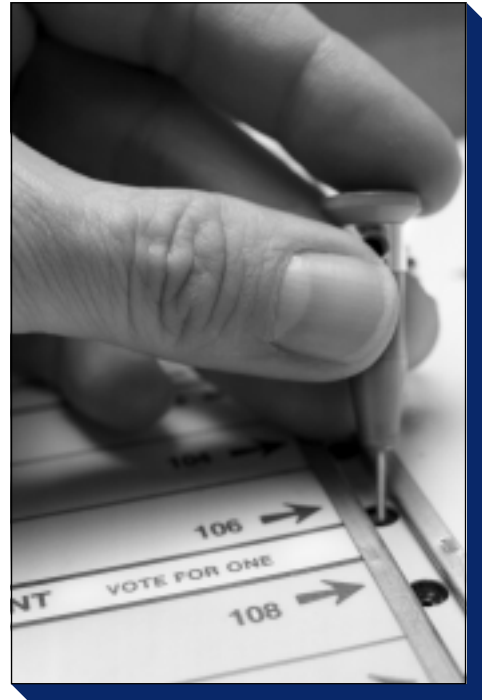
Primary:

New election system heads list of other issues

Establishing a new primary-election system was probably tops among several additional issues capturing our attention this year.

According to the plan that passed the Legislature (barely), the top two primary candidates would move on to the general election. This is much like the soon-to-be-defunct (and unconstitutional) blanket primary we've had for 70 years. The big difference is that a general election in November could feature two candidates from the same party – and minor-party candidates would rarely make it to November.

But the governor vetoed the "Top Two" portion of this primary bill. This means that a different primary system will be put in place. This fallback primary system would hold primary elections for major parties only. Independent and minor-party candidates would hold nominating conventions, and then their qualifying candidates would go directly to the general-election ballot.



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